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UNFPA – Annual report of the Executive Director

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Report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in 2015

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

In line with General Assembly resolution 59/267, this report provides a synopsis of UNFPA management responses to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and draws attention to specific recommendations directed to the legislative organs of the United Nations system organizations. The present report focuses on the six JIU reports relevant to UNFPA issued in 2015. Of the total 40 recommendations issued, 20 are relevant to UNFPA, of which 17 recommendations are addressed to UNFPA management and 3 to the legislative organs. The present report also includes an update of the implementation status of recommendations contained in reports issued by the JIU in 2013 and 2014.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report, especially those aspects of the JIU reports that have particular relevance to the work of UNFPA.

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I. Overview of Joint Inspection Unit reports and notes

1. The present report provides a summary of UNFPA management responses to recommendations issued by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), included in six reports which are relevant to UNFPA and were issued since the report of 2014 (DP/FPA/2015/5 (Part II). The present document includes the recommendations directed to the UNFPA governing body.

2. These reports concern the following:

(a) Evaluation of mainstreaming of full and productive employment and decent work by the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2015/1);

(b) Recommendations to the General Assembly of the United Nations for the determination of parameters for a comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States (JIU/REP/2015/2);

(c) Cooperation among the United Nations regional commissions (JIU/REP/2015/3);

(d) Public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2015/4);

(e) Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2015/5);

(f) Review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2015/6).

II. Synopsis and review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit reports and recommendations

3. The management responses to the relevant recommendations in the six JIU reports, including the recommendations for consideration by the legislative body, are provided below. Annex 1 to the present report provides a statistical summary of reports that are subject to the present reporting; annex 2 and annex 3 provide information on the implementation status of recommendations issued in 2014 and 2013 respectively; annex 4 contains an overview of the recommendations pertaining to the six reports included in this report, relevant to UNFPA and directed to the governing body of UNFPA, together with the management responses; and annex 5 outlines the topics of relevance for UNFPA in the JIU work programme for 2016.

A. Evaluation of mainstreaming of full and productive employment and decent work by the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2015/1)

4. The evaluation assessed how the United Nations system organizations have taken up the call from resolutions of the Economic and Social Council to mainstream decent work principles into their own strategic planning/work at various levels (inter-agency, headquarters, regional, country), with a view to using the lessons learned in finalizing the post-2015 agenda. It identified the mechanisms that are in place within the United Nations system for mainstreaming, assessed barriers to implementation and identified aspects of an enabling environment, as well as the challenges faced by the system in integrating decent work issues at different levels. The evaluation also identified successes and good practices in mainstreaming the decent work agenda into the activities of the United Nations system organizations.

5. The evaluation found that, generally, the mainstreaming of the decent work agenda into the activities of United Nations system organizations achieved moderate success. There were extensive variations among organizations, some of them demonstrating a high level of mainstreaming, whereas others had not undertaken any activities relating to decent work.

6. The JIU report contains seven recommendations, one of which is addressed to the UNFPA Executive Director (recommendation 6), asking him to identify areas where the decent work agenda can be linked to the activities of the organization and to make existing linkages more explicit. UNFPA supports the recommendation and notes that steps have already been taken to integrate the decent work agenda into the strategic plan 2014-2017.

B. Recommendations to the General Assembly of the United Nations for the determination of parameters for a comprehensive review of the United Nations system support for small island developing states (JIU/REP/2015/2)

7. In accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly in paragraph 12 of its resolution 69/217, the JIU identified areas to be addressed in a comprehensive review to enhance coordination and strengthen overall implementation of the priority areas identified in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway by the United Nations system.

8. The report addressed its six recommendations to the General Assembly, indicating areas to be considered in a comprehensive review to ensure that the following issues are covered: (a) mapping the role of United Nations system organizations in providing support to small island developing States, addressing interlinkages among global mandates (sustainable development goals, climate change, disaster risk reduction, financing for development, among others) to promote the sustainable development of small island developing States; (b) assessing the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and the Office of

the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the mandates of the Office of the High Representative, as well as their allocation of resources and effective coordination among them; (c) assessing the role and programmatic coordination within the departments of the United Nations Secretariat and entities such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) and the regional commissions in support of small island developing States; (d) assessing the role and function of the Inter-agency Consultative Group on Small Island Developing States, chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in fostering the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway; (e) analysing the institutional set-up to foster synergies across the United Nations system in supporting small island developing States, in line with paragraphs 122 to 124 of General Assembly resolution 69/15; and (f) strengthening coordination between the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to increase effectiveness and improve the quality and transparency of reporting to Member States.

9. UNFPA fully endorses the findings and supports the recommendations included in the report. Although these are addressed to the General Assembly, UNFPA is committed to supporting the effort, particularly through its active participation in the relevant inter-agency body to strengthen coordination and collaboration.

C. Cooperation among the United Nations regional commissions (JIU/REP/2015/3)

10. The review assessed the relevance and effectiveness of the existing cooperation among the regional commissions and other entities of the United Nations system, especially within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, and the interface between the regional and global governance of the regional commissions. The five regional commissions play an important role in bringing together relevant United Nations system entities and non-United Nations actors for norm-setting, consensus-building and follow-up on major global initiatives, and their analytical and normative roles are perceived to be their major strengths. With the adoption of the ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the commissions are well placed to serve as a bridge between processes at the global, regional and national levels for implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. However, mechanisms for mutual cooperation need improvement, and the report made several recommendations to that end. The executive secretaries of the regional commissions are advised to review the modus operandi of their meetings and interactions. The respective roles of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and United Nations Development Group regional teams need further clarification. Regular substantive and analytical reporting by the commissions to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly can help to improve the visibility of the regional commissions at United Nations Headquarters. The report also offered suggestions to enhance cohesion and synergies across the United Nations development pillar.

12. UNFPA, as a member of the United Nations Development Group, will support the efforts as necessary.

D. Public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2015/4)

13. This system-wide review stressed that public information and communications have an important role to play in reaffirming the relevance of the United Nations system and in invigorating its credibility, image and reputation through a strategic approach to its function. It identified nine benchmarks to ensure that the public information and communications function supports organizational goals and priorities. These benchmarks focus on corporate communications strategies; access to executive managers; coherent planning and messaging;

the capacity to produce multilingual communications products or activities; and the monitoring of activities.

14. In assessing the current system-wide coordination mechanisms, the review called for the development of synergies at the principals level in the work of the United Nations Communications Group and the United Nations Development Group Communications and Advocacy Working Group. It presented the successes and challenges of local arrangements for promoting joint public information and communications among the organizations through the United Nations information centres and the local United Nations communications groups.

15. All six recommendations in the report are of relevance for UNFPA; one is addressed to the Executive Board (recommendation 1) and five to the Executive Director (recommendations 2-6).

16. UNFPA supports all recommendations; its actions are already in compliance with them: adhering to the proposed benchmarking for a more strategic public information and communication function (recommendations 1 and 2); strengthening and supporting the organizational goals and strategic priorities by promoting system-wide mechanisms and local arrangements for joint public information and communication in the United Nations system organizations (recommendations 3 and 4); and examining its policies and practices to better manage and administer the use of social media (recommendations 5 and 6).

E. Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2015/5)

17. This review involved the organizations participating in the Joint Inspection Unit, as well as a number of secretariats of environmental conventions, with particular focus on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The total reported expenditures on climate change-related activities by the United Nations system organizations and multilateral environmental agreements amounted to $1,882 million for the biennium 2012-2013 and were projected to total $2,027 million in the biennium 2014-2015. Most of the organizations saw their contributions to climate change mitigation or adaptation as by-products of their core goals. With few exceptions, they do not have a specific methodology to track climate change-related work by types of activities and funding. The United Nations system lacks an established common methodology for identifying work according to sector and impact in addressing climate change. Such a methodology would be instrumental for enhancing coordination and fostering synergies within the United Nations system and to 'deliver as one' in preventing and combating the adverse effects of climate change.

18. Five of the six recommendations contained in the review are of relevance to UNFPA. They aim at ensuring system-wide coordination, accountability, improved information-sharing, support for technology transfer and adequate consideration of climate change issues at the country level, particularly through the inclusion of such issues in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks.

19. One of these five recommendations concerns the Executive Board (recommendation 2) and four the Executive Director (recommendations 1, 3, 4 and 6). The Executive Director (recommendation 1) and the Executive Board (recommendation 2) are requested to prepare, support and endorse a system-wide strategy on climate change. Furthermore, to establish a clear accountability framework for the design, implementation and monitoring of and reporting on the development of climate-change activities, the Executive Director is called upon to promote the development of common methodologies for information sharing; and to agree on measurement and monitoring tools across the system for tracking progress made on adaptation and mitigation, in accordance with the progress made under the Convention framework (recommendations 3 and 4). The last recommendation aims at ensuring the use of the United Nations Development Group guidelines for mainstreaming climate change in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks so that the climate change dimension is

integrated explicitly and effectively into common country assessments and development plans at country and regional levels (recommendation 6).

20. UNFPA considers the global and transnational nature of climate change a near unprecedented development challenge, which requires significant cross-national and global, regional, national and subnational coordination on both adaptation and mitigation. UNFPA supports the recommendations and is working to implement them with partner organizations.

21. A central UNFPA approach at this stage has been its leadership, under the auspices of the High-level Committee for Programmes, to generate a system-wide strategy on climate change through an iterative process, beginning with global-level policy and programmatic coherence to a full, field-level implementation-focused approach. A set of principles and priorities for action, the result of an exercise co-chaired by UNFPA, was delivered to the High-level Committee for Programmes at its 31st session in March 2016. The principles and their implementation are intended to address the recommendations mentioned above.

F. Review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2015/6)

22. The review showed that 19 of the 28 organizations participating in the JIU currently provide ombudsman services to their employees. It also indicated an insufficient level of common understanding of the role of the organizational ombudsman or the principles under which he or she operates. The review recommended including questions related to ombudsman services in staff surveys of the organizations in order to identify activities to increase staff awareness and understanding of this function. Staff members serving in headquarters offices are in a privileged position compared with their field-based colleagues, who often rely on technology to 'virtually' meet with their ombudsman, who is usually based at headquarters. The review called for a more client-oriented approach, whereby clients are given a choice of using any United Nations system organization's ombudsman residing in or visiting their location.

23. The terms of reference under which ombudsman practitioners in the United Nations system organizations operate are not comprehensive; in most cases, they are more than a decade old and thus in need of being updated and disseminated across the respective organizations. There are no harmonized procedures or standards of operational practice. As a result, reported statistics are difficult to fully compare; this suggests that an elaboration of a United Nations system harmonized case management manual might be necessary. The review recommended continuous training and the inclusion of an ombudsman certification process, and that the professionalization, accountability and appraisal of the ombudsman's performance be ensured and improved on a continuous basis through a process involving management and staff representatives.

24. The review also suggested that the legislative bodies of all organizations should provide access for ombudsmen to report to them on systemic issues so that, in the case of conflicting priorities or limited resources, Member States could articulate their main concerns and priorities. Finally, it recommended that the ombudsmen and mediators of the United Nations and related international organizations network organize a subgroup, limited to United Nations system organizations, to deal with the United Nations system-specific challenges and recommendations contained in the report.

25. All eight recommendations included in the report are of relevance for UNFPA; one is addressed to the Executive Board (recommendations 5), and seven to the Executive Director (recommendations 1-4 and 6-8).

26. UNFPA supports the recommendation to update the provisions of the terms of reference related to the establishment of the ombudsman office and its operative functions (recommendation 1), and to include relevant questions in the organization staff surveys to identify the kind of activities necessary for increasing staff awareness and understanding of the ombudsman function (recommendation 2). UNFPA is pleased to report that several

questions contained in its global staff survey address the work of the ombudsman office and informal conflict-resolution mechanisms. UNFPA would like to recommend caution regarding recommendation 3, that staff be given the choice of using an ombudsman of any United Nations system organization resident or temporarily present in their field location. The latter may not be as familiar with the policies, procedures and culture of the organization. This could potentially compromise a holistic perspective of the issues faced by the organization of which the ombudsman can bring to the Executive Head. In addition, it could encourage staff to seek biased advice and to seek the response they find most favourable; it would also cause difficulties in relation to cost sharing among organizations.

27. Regarding the formal presentation of systemic issues to the Executive Board (recommendation 5), the question to be posed is whether the organization (whether management or staff) is better served by an ombudsman who informally and confidentially raises systemic issues with the Executive Head – or by an ombudsman who formally reports to the Executive Board, with management formally replying to the Board – as is already the case for the Board of Auditors, the Office of Audit and Investigation Services, the Evaluation Office and the Ethics Office. Such a decision should be made by the Ombudsman Office and the respective legislative bodies, governed by their understanding how best to serve the organization, and should not be imposed by external bodies.

28. UNFPA prefers not to interfere in the management of the ombudsman office, which should remain independent, while considering that the recommended measures would strengthen its function: introduction of a system-wide harmonized case system (recommendation 4); importance of professional certification and training (recommendation 6); creation of a dedicated United Nations system ombudsmen group (recommendation 8).

29. UNFPA considers that the adoption of an appraisal process that includes management and staff representatives (recommendation 7) may adversely affect the independence of the ombudsman function, in reality or in perception; therefore, it would be advisable that the function devises an external review mechanism, based on quality and performance standards (similar to oversight functions like evaluation, internal audit or investigation).

III. Status of UNFPA implementation of Joint Inspection Unit recommendations issued during 2013-2014

30. In accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/258, requesting the JIU to enhance dialogue with participating organizations to strengthen the implementation of its recommendations, the JIU requested information on the follow-up to recommendations issued in 2013 and 2014. Annexes 2 and 3 of the present report provide an update of the implementation status of these recommendations.

31. Of the 41 recommendations issued by the JIU in 2014 that are relevant to and accepted by UNFPA, 18 recommendations (43 per cent) have been implemented (status by mid-February 2016). Similarly, of the 25 recommendations concerning UNFPA issued in 2013, 8 recommendations (32 per cent) have been implemented by the same date. Further details are provided in the web-based JIU follow-up system accessible to Member States.

32. UNFPA is committed to following up on the implementation of the remaining recommendations relevant to UNFPA and to continuing its contribution to the various JIU initiatives in the future.

Annex 1 – Summary of reports issued in 2015

Report symbol	Report name	Total recommendations	Relevant to UNFPA	Of which recommendations directed to the Executive Board
JIU/REP/2015/1	Evaluation of mainstreaming of full and productive employment and decent work by the United Nations system organizations	7	1	-
JIU/REP/2015/2	Recommendations to the General Assembly of the United Nations for the determination of parameters for a comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States	6	-	-
JIU/REP/2015/3	Cooperation among the United Nations regional commissions	7	-	-
JIU/REP/2015/4	Public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system	6	6	1
JIU/REP/2015/5	Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations	6	5	1
JIU/REP/2015/6	Review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system	8	8	1
Total for 2015		**40**	**20**	**3**

The following JIU management letter, relevant to UNFPA, was received in 2015; however, it did not contain any specific recommendations:

JIU/ML/2015/6 - Management letters on assessment of post-award contract management processes in 14 United Nations system organizations.

Annex 2 – Status of implementation of JIU recommendations issued in 2014 as of mid-February 2016

Report symbol	Report title	Total recommen-dations	Relevant to UNFPA	*Of which to governing bodies*	Implementation status of UNFPA relevant recommendations		
					Not accepted/ under considera-tion	Imple-mented	In progress/ to be started
JIU/REP/2014/1	An analysis of the resource mobilization within the United Nations system	5	4	*2*	1	2	1
JIU/REP/2014/4	Post Rio+20 review of the environmental governance within the United Nations system	13	3	-	-	-	3
JIU/REP/2014/6	Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system	9	7	*2*	-	4	3
JIU/REP/2014/8	Use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations	13	12	*1*	3	6	3
JIU/REP/2014/9	Contract management and administration in the United Nations system	12	11	*2*	-	5	6
JIU/NOTE/2014/1	Use of retirees and staff retained beyond the mandatory age of separation at United Nations organizations	5	4	-	3	1	-
Total for 2014		**57**	**41**	*7*	**7**	**18**	**16**

The following JIU reports and notes issued in 2014 are not relevant to UNFPA:

JIU/REP/2014/2 - Review of management and administration in the World Intellectual Property Organization;

JIU/REP/2014/5 - Follow up inspection of the 2009 review of management and administration in the World Tourism Organization;

JIU/REP/2014/7 - Review of management and administration of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The following JIU study was completed and relevant to UNFPA; however, it did not contain any specific recommendations:

JIU/REP/2014/3 - Capital/refurbishment/construction projects across the United Nations system.

Annex 3 - Status of implementation of JIU recommendations issued in 2013

Report symbol	Report title	Total recommen-dations	Relevant to UNFPA	*Of which to governing bodies*	Implementation status of UNFPA relevant recommendations		
					Not accepted/ not relevant	Imple-mented	In progress/ to be started
JIU/REP/2013/1	Review of long-term agreements in procurement in the United Nations system	5	5	*1*	-	2	3
JIU/REP/2013/2	Records and archives management in the United Nations	6	6	*1*	1	-	5
JIU/REP/2013/3	Selection and appointment process of the United Nations Resident Coordinators, including preparation, training and support provided for their work	3	2	-	1	-	1
JIU/REP/2013/4	Review of the management of implementing partners in United Nations system organizations	12	11	*2*	1	6	4
JIU/NOTE/2013/1	Reference checks in the United Nations system organizations	2	1	-	-	-	1
Total for 2013		**28**	**25**	***4***	**3**	**8**	**14**

as of mid-February 2016

The following JIU reports issued in 2013 are not relevant to UNFPA:

JIU/NOTE/2013/2 - Review of management and administration in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The following JIU study was completed and relevant to UNFPA; however, it did not contain any specific recommendations:

Feasibility study on the review of safety and security in the United Nations system organizations.

Annex 4 – Review of relevant Joint Inspection Unit recommendations in 2015 for consideration by the Executive Board

Recommendations	Management comments
JIU/REP/2015/4 Public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system	
# 1: The legislative/governing bodies of the United Nations system organizations should request the executive heads to embrace the nine benchmarks proposed in the present report, in order to enhance the strategic role of the public information and communications function in contributing to the achievement of organizational goals and priorities, thereby promoting global support for their organization.	Supported.
JIU/REP/2015/5 Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations	
# 2: The governing bodies of the United Nations organizations should support and endorse the participation of their respective organizations involved in cross-cutting areas directly or indirectly related to climate change, in a system-wide United Nations strategy to combat climate change, in a manner consistent with the outcome of the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21)	Supported.
JIU/REP/2015/6 Review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system	
# 5: The legislative bodies of the United Nations system organizations should make it possible for the ombudsman to report to them on systemic issues identified on a regular basis.	Supported.

Annex 5 – Programme of work of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2016 as related to UNFPA

Following system-wide consultations and suggestions, the JIU identified seven new topics in its Programme of Work for 2016. Of these, all but two are of interest to UNFPA and will be actively supported. The list is included below.

Item	Title	Type
1.	Review of administrative services delivery in selected United Nations system organizations	Several organizations
2.	Review of knowledge management in the United Nations system	System-wide
3.	Donor-led accountability and oversight reviews in United Nations system organizations	System-wide
4.	Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: final findings	System-wide
5.	Review of travel policies in the United Nations system	System-wide

Summaries of projects in the programme of work 2016

1. Review of administrative services delivery in selected United Nations system organizations

Organizations apply various strategies, such as cooperation at the country level to reduce the duplication of functions and consolidate support services through a range of options; internal consolidation and reorganization; re-engineering of business processes; and the grouping of certain functions in regional or global services centres. The request by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/248 that the Secretary-General submit a refined and detailed proposal on a global service delivery model further illustrates the ongoing interest in this matter. The JIU will review the experiences and approaches taken by a select group of participating organizations in their efforts to redesign business processes for carrying out administrative services. The review will focus on the roles of service centres, inter-agency harmonization and consolidation and the administration of personnel matters.

2. Review of knowledge management in the United Nations system

By building on previous reports produced by the JIU, the review will undertake a comparative analysis of knowledge management policies and related practices across the United Nations system. In addition to sharing good practices, it aims to identify enabling factors for the effective implementation of knowledge management policies and possible ways to harmonize them. Furthermore, an analysis will be conducted on the key components of the regulatory frameworks and procedures, as well as the organizational culture and the capacity to adapt to the dynamics of information and communication technologies. A special emphasis will be placed on knowledge management as a way to contribute to the enhancement of operational effectiveness.

3. Donor-led accountability and oversight reviews in United Nations system organizations

Donor funding has become essential for most United Nations system organizations in pursuing their mandates. In transferring funds to the United Nations system, donors are increasingly undertaking their own oversight reviews of United Nations programmes to ensure that funds are being used efficiently and for the intended purposes, according to expected levels of accountability. These reviews are in addition to the assurance provided by the existing

oversight and accountability architecture of the United Nations system comprising internal oversight offices, external auditors, and other accountability mechanisms. This report will focus, among other things, on the nature, extent and reasons for donor-led reviews, the degree to which donor accountability requirements may be satisfied through existing oversight processes and how additional requirements could more effectively be planned, coordinated and budgeted to achieve the objectives of all stakeholders.

4. Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing states: final findings

The review will focus on the overall system-wide support to small island developing States, covering funds and programmes, specialized agencies and IAEA, as well as some secretariats of environmental conventions. The results of the comprehensive review will be included as an addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on small island developing States, as requested in resolutions 69/288 and 70/202.

5. Review of travel policies in the United Nations system

Travel is the second largest expense in the United Nations system organizations, after staff costs. As such, in various resolutions, the General Assembly has repeatedly stressed the importance of taking practical measures for more effective and efficient use of air travel resources of the organizations. This requires taking stock of existing travel policies, with a view to identifying savings and efficiency measures. Moreover, the study complements the 2010 JIU report entitled "Review of travel arrangements within the United Nations system" (A/65/338), which focuses on travel policies, standards and areas where system-wide harmonization could take place, as well as measures to rationalize travel costs.